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ACTIVITIES****SESRTCIC CO-ORGANISES A WORKSHOP ON
WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

The Workshop on “Promoting Women’s Entrepreneurship in The MENA Region” was held in Istanbul, Turkey, on 11-12 December 2006. The Workshop was organised by the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs and Local Development (CFE) in partnership with the SESRTCIC. Dr. Savaş Alpay, Director General, Mr. Yakup Karaca, senior researcher and Ms. Sevgi Reçberoğlu, researcher, represented the Centre thereat.

The Pilot Project on Promoting Women’s Entrepreneurship in the MENA Region (April 2007 to April 2009) aims to promote and accelerate the development of women’s entrepreneurship in the MENA region. It is initially intended to create a specialised action force by training a select group of women in 6 pilot MENA countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia), identified on the basis of their potential, experience, and skills. These women are then expected to serve as operational intermediaries for strengthening entrepreneurial capacities and helping women entrepreneurs succeed.

Representatives of the pilot project MENA countries and representatives of Palestine, UNIDO, ILO, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), International Council for Small Business (ICSB), World Association of Women Entrepreneurs, Strategy International-Italy, Quantum Leaps, Inc.-USA and Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey attended the Workshop.

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The two-day workshop focused on the two phases of the pilot project; the first being the performance of the mapping survey performed by the OECD to determine the current situation of women

entrepreneurship in the MENA region, while the second being the training the trainers seminars and capacity building on advocacy.

Regarding the mapping survey and the preliminary results, the participants noted that the data in hand reveal that women entrepreneurship is still low in the MENA region, as in all other regions of the world, and requested advice on the kind of data to be collected. The SESRTCIC offered to assist the OECD in completing the survey through its own regional contact points and to have the final Synthesis report translated into Arabic.

As for the training the trainers seminars and capacity building on advocacy, the participants noted the idea as an interesting initiative and requested that it be implemented as soon as possible. The participants suggested that the contents of the seminar be more well-defined and strengthened by targeting country specific characteristics.

OIC NEWS

FINANCE CONTROL ORGAN AUDITS CENTRE ACCOUNTS

The Twenty-seventh Session of the Finance Control Organ of the OIC (FCO) convened in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on 30 September-11 October 2006 to audit the final accounts of the General Secretariat of the OIC and its subsidiary organs,

namely SESRTCIC, ICDT, IUT and IRCICA for the financial year 2005/2006 ending on 30 June 2006. During the process, the Ankara Centre accounts and financial operations were meticulously checked and found to be in conformity

with the OIC related rules and regulations. The audit report also commended the Centre for its judicious practices in streamlining its overall expenditures and made some observations

and recommendations thereon. Mr. Recep Bicer, Director of the Administration and Finance Department, represented the Centre at the meetings of the Session.

MINISTERS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN THE MEMBER COUNTRIES DISCUSS MATTERS OF MUTUAL CONCERN

The Third Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research was held in Kuwait City, State of Kuwait, on 19-21 November 2006. Dr. Savas Alpay, Director General represented the Centre thereat.

The Conference Agenda included the review of various reports and studies, namely a Study on the Ways to Enhance Scientific and Technological Cooperation among the Countries of the Islamic World, a project on the Islamic Ethical Network on Science and Technology, a project on the Implementation Mechanisms of the Strategy for Development of Biotechnology in the Islamic Countries, the Draft Action Plan on the Prevention of Migration of Scientific Competencies from the countries of the Islamic World and the Draft Strategy on the Promotion of University Education in the Islamic World.

The Centre contributed to the Conference two studies titled “Science and Technology in the OIC Member Countries” and “Ranking of Universities Worldwide and Its Implications for

Universities in the OIC Member Countries”. The first paper presents a brief assessment of science and technology (S&T) indicators for the OIC member countries in comparison to the rest of the world by using the available data collected from the relevant international sources and concludes that the contribution of the OIC member countries to science and technology in the modern world is minimal considering their high potential, rich cultural heritage and long and vast scholarly tradition. It also puts forward some policy actions to attain further progress in this important field, including encouraging research and development programmes, improving educational institutions and facilitating academic interaction and exchange of knowledge among academic institutions in the member countries. The second attempts to identify the current competitive positions of universities in the OIC member countries in comparison to world-class universities (top 500). It discusses some possible ways and means to improve the competitiveness of universities in the OIC countries and policies that could be adopted by those countries towards the goal of including at least 20 universities in the list of world-

class universities in the coming years. The study also presents rankings of universities in the OIC countries according to different criteria.

At the Closing Session, the Ministers adopted the Final Report which includes a

number of important recommendations on the ways and means of enhancing scientific and technological cooperation among Islamic countries.

THE COMCEC HOLDS ITS TWENTY-SECOND SESSION

The Twenty-second Session of the COMCEC convened in Istanbul on 21-24 November 2006 with the participation of delegates from 43 member countries, the COMCEC Coordination Office, the OIC General Secretariat, and its subsidiary, specialized and affiliated organs, namely, the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC), Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), Islamic University of Technology (IUT), Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Organisation of Islamic Shipowners Association (OISA) and Association of National Development Finance Institutions (ADFIMI). The Session was also attended by the representatives of some international institutions such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO), Federation of Consultants from Islamic Countries (FCIC), Federation of Contractors from Islamic Countries (FOCIC), United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), Developing Eight

(D-8), and West Africa Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). The Centre was represented thereat by Dr. Savas Alpay, Director General, Mr. Ilhan Ugurel, Adviser, Dr. Mehmet Barca, Adviser, Mr. Nabil Dabour, Senior Researcher, and Mr. Yakup Karaca, Senior Researcher.

A meeting of senior officials was held on 21-22 November to discuss and deliberate on the various items on the agenda of the COMCEC to which the Centre contributed four reports and background documents, namely “Annual Economic Report on the OIC Countries, 2006”, “Review of the Agreements and Statutes in the Field of Economic, Commercial and Technical Cooperation among the OIC Member States”, “Review of the Mechanism of the COMCEC Exchange of Views Sessions”, and “The Possibility of Establishing a Free Trade Area among the OIC Member Countries”.

The Ministerial Session was held on 23 November where the Ministers and Heads of Delegation reviewed and adopted the draft resolutions prepared by the senior officials on several matters related to

economic cooperation among the OIC member countries as well as to the economic assistance to some member countries. The Ministers also decided that “Micro-Credit Financing and Poverty Alleviation in the Member States” be the theme of the exchange of views at the next session of the COMCEC, designated the SESRTCIC to take full responsibility as the coordinator institution for the exchange of views, and requested the Centre to organise, in collaboration with

the IDB, the OIC General Secretariat and the other relevant OIC and international institutions, a workshop on the topic and submit its report to the Twenty-third Session of the COMCEC.

The Ministers also agreed that the Twenty-third Meeting of the Follow-up Committee of the COMCEC convene on 22-24 May 2007, and the Twenty-third Session of the COMCEC on 13-16 November 2007.

TRADE NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE LAUNCHES FIRST MEETING OF SECOND ROUND OF TRADE NEGOTIATIONS FOR ESTABLISHING TRADE PREFERENTIAL SYSTEM AMONG OIC COUNTRIES

The First Meeting of the Second Round of Trade Negotiations for Establishing the Trade Preferential System among the OIC Countries (TPS-OIC) was held on 24-26 November 2006 in Istanbul on the sidelines of the Twenty-second Session of the COMCEC. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Kursat Tuzmen, Minister of State of the Republic of Turkey, and attended by the representatives of 17 member countries of the Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) and 10 other OIC member countries. Representatives of the OIC General Secretariat and the following institutions also attended the Meeting: COMCEC Coordination Office, ICDT, IDB, SESRTCIC, GCC, ECO and WAEMU. Dr. Savas Alpay, Director General, and Mr. Ilhan Ugurel, Adviser, represented the Centre thereat.

The TNC Secretariat made a presentation on the background and output of the First

Round as well as the issues to be discussed during the Second Round of Trade Negotiations. It pointed out that the rules of origin and non-tariff barriers constitute the two substantive issues on the agenda of the Second Round and that work on them should be finalized within the prescribed 12-month time-frame if the target date of January 2009 for PRETAS is to be met.

After deliberations, the Committee called upon the Member States that have not signed and ratified the Protocol on the Preferential Tariff Scheme for TPS-OIC (PRETAS) to do so at their earliest convenience and decided that the Secretariat would communicate with the TNC members regarding the specific date and venue of the next meeting of the TNC.

MINISTERS OF ENVIRONMENT IN THE MEMBER COUNTRIES DISCUSS VARIOUS ENVIRONMENT ISSUES

The Second Islamic Conference of Ministers of Environment was held in Jeddah, on 13-15 December 2006. Dr. Savas Alpay, Director General, represented the Centre thereat.

After the adoption of the Draft Agenda and Programme, the Conference discussed various reports on its agenda together with some specialised projects such as the General Framework on Natural Disasters Management, the Project of Establishing an Environment Information Centre, the Project of Establishing the Islamic Environment Network and the Project of Establishing a Specialised Islamic Body for the Environment. The Centre contributed to the Conference three studies titled “Environmental Sustainability in the OIC Member Countries”, “Environmental Performance of the OIC Member Countries”, and “Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol: Implications for the OIC Member Countries”. The first paper analyses the environmental prospects of the OIC countries in the light of the data and information provided in the Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI) 2005 prepared jointly by Yale University, Columbia University, World Economic Forum and the European Commission. The second identifies the current performances of the OIC countries in core environmental issues such as air pollution, land protection and greenhouse gas emissions in the light of the data and information taken from the Pilot

2006 Environmental Performance Index (EPI) prepared and published by Yale University’s Environment School and the Earth Institute at Columbia University in collaboration with the World Economic Forum and the European Commission. The third reviews the risks and implications of climate change and the international response to global warming with a focus on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN FCCC). In light of this review, the paper examines the situation in the OIC countries in terms of their position in this debate, their recent state of greenhouse gas emissions, their rankings within the Climate Change Index (CCI) and the economic implications of their ratifying the Kyoto Protocol.

At the Closing Session of the Conference, the Ministers adopted the Jeddah Commitments for Sustainable Development whereby the OIC Member States assert their resolve to work towards implementing as well as providing appropriate means and conditions and coordinating with the competent authorities in the Member States for the fulfilment of a number of commitments including: formulating a common, integrated Islamic strategy for sustainable development, combating illiteracy, poverty and unemployment, and improving the quality of life for Muslim peoples; improving and generalising the level of health services; developing educational services and supporting

capacities in the field of education and transfer of technology; supporting participation of women, the youth and civil society in sustainable development; preserving and rationalising water resources; preserving soil, land and biodiversity; taking

interest in the quality of air, energy and the impact of climate change; encouraging production and sustainable consumption; and updating and enforcing special legislation.

OTHER MEETINGS

SESRTCIC PARTICIPATES IN THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE UN-ESCWA STATISTICAL COMMITTEE

The Seventh Session of the Statistical Committee of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA) was held in Beirut on 7-9 November 2006. Representatives from 11 of the 13 UN-ESCWA member countries (Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen), governmental and non-governmental organisations, and UN organisations and

agencies attended the Session. Dr. Savas Alpay, Director General, was invited to represent the Centre thereat.

Dr. Alpay took the opportunity of his presence in Beirut to hold talks with Ms. Mervat M. Tallawy, UN-ESCWA's Executive Secretary, on the possible ways and means of developing cooperation relations and carrying out joint projects between the SESRTCIC and UN-ESCWA.

CENTRE'S AGENDA FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2007

January

Building Capacity to Measure and Foster the Progress of Societies: pre-conference for Africa, 14 January 2007, Kigali, Rwanda

Meeting of the National Statistical Offices of the Africal OIC Member Countries, 15-19 January 2007, Kigali, Rwanda

February

OECD Regional Conference for Asia, 8-9 February 2007, Seoul, Korea

Experts Group Meeting on Ranking of Universities in the OIC Member Countries, 19 February 2007, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Training Course on “Labour Statistics and Statistical Data Analysis”, 20-23 February 2007, Sana’a, Republic of Yemen

Training Course on “Web-based Data Compilation Techniques”, 26-28 February 2007, Baku, Azerbaijan

Thirty-eighth Session of the Statistical Commission of the United Nations, 27 February-2 March 2007, New York, USA

March

Thirtieth Session of the Islamic Commission for Economic, Cultural and Social Affairs, 3-5 March 2007, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Meeting of OIC Member Countries on Ranking of Universities in the OIC Member Countries, March 2007, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

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Infopreport İslam Ülkeleri İstatistiksel, Ekonomik ve Sosyal Araştırma ve Eğitim Merkezi tarafından yılda dört defa yayımlanır.

ISSN: 0257-9480

Postmaster: If undelivered, please return to

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Attar Sokak, No. 4

06700 G.O.P.

Ankara, Turkey

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